IN SUMMARY

Let It Be
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says schools should make in-placement asbestos management the "cornerstone" of their asbestos-control programs. **Page 4.**

Raising the Ante
Teachers in the New Orleans public schools went on strike last week and reinstated costlier demands after negotiations with the city school board reached an impasse. **Page 5.**

Count Them Out
Facing a conflict between national accreditation standards and a state law, two Texas education schools have withdrawn from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. **Page 7.**

Rescuing a Generation
Black organizations are redoubling their efforts to rescue a generation of black males threatened by high rates of homicide, suicide, and unemployment. **Page 9.**

The Future of Catholic Schools
The nation's Roman Catholic bishops will soon have an opportunity to make their first major statement on Catholic schools and religious education in nearly 20 years. **Page 10.**

Pass the Plate?
North Carolina's fiscal woes may be undermining the state's widely noted effort to bring discussion of the role of religion in history and literature back into the classroom. **Page 16.**

Against All Odds
John R. Silber, a Democrat, and William F. Weld, a Republican, score stunning victories over the front-runners in their respective party primaries for governor in Massachusetts. **Page 16.**

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EDUCATION WEEK (**ISSN 0277-4232**) is published 40 times per year (weekly except for the first week in January, the last week in June, the month of July, the first four weeks in August, and the last two weeks in December) by Editorial Projects in Education, Incorporated. Editorial and advertising sales offices are located at 4301 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 250, Washington, D.C. 20008. (202) 364-4114. Subscriptions: U.S.: $49.94 for 40 issues. Canada: $72.94 for 40 issues. Foreign: $114.94 (airmail) and $82.94 (surface mail) for 40 issues. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to EDUCATION WEEK, P.O. Box 2083, Marion, Ohio 43305. Volume X, Issue 4.

ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

Dropout Rate Remains Unchanged Since Mid-1980's, E.D. Reports

The nation's dropout rate remained steady last year, and has stayed virtually the same since the mid-1980's, a report released by the U.S. Department of Education concludes.

In its second annual report to the Congress, the Department found that, on average, 4.5 percent of the students in grades 10 to 12 dropped out of school each year between 1987 and 1989. In last year's report, covering school years 1985 to 1988, the figure was 4.4 percent. The Department is required under the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 to submit an annual report to the Congress on dropouts.

According to the report, some 4 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 24, or 12.6 percent of this age group, were out of school and without a diploma in 1989, the same percentage as in 1985. About one-third of all Hispanics in this age group were dropouts, the report said, compared with 13.8 percent for blacks and 12.4 percent for whites.

■ **This month, the Boys Clubs of America officially becomes the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.**

The name change, announced by the club's national director, Thomas G. Garth, reflects the growing numbers of girls and young women who participate in the organization. Of the 605 local clubs nationwide, 552 provide services for girls, including pregnancy prevention for teenagers. Other club programs address drug abuse, careers, and gangs.

Established as the Federated Boys Clubs in 1906, the organization did not sponsor co-educational programs until 1979.

The name change also reflects an overall mandate to improve services for disadvantaged children, Mr. Garth said. In keeping with the new title, the national organization is urging local clubs to eliminate gender-biased language from learning materials and to focus on sexism in administrative policy and staffing.

DISTRICTS

Md. District's Minority Programs Termed 'Inadequate' in Report

Minority-education programs in the Montgomery County, Md., schools suffer from "inadequate commitment, organization, direction, support, and accountability," a consultant to the system has charged in a report.

The system needs to revise its magnet-schools, bilingual-education, and minority-achievement programs, according to the report, written by the prominent Yale psychology professor Edmund W. Gordon.

Conducted over a period of nine months, the study included an analysis of minority student achievement; interviews with teachers, parents, and students; and site visits. A final report will be issued later this year after public hearings this fall.

Specifically, Mr. Gordon said the English for Speakers of Other Languages program appears to improve the scores of students whose first language is treated with respect, but it fails to acclimate students to U.S. culture. The county's magnet-schools program, designed to improve racial equity, often simply concentrates the segregation, the report said.

The report credits the school system for its affirmative-action hiring program and its recognition that minority children are more often suspended and placed in special-education classes, and less likely to be identified for honors or gifted-and-talented programs.

The study is similar to one issued in Prince George's County, Md., another suburb of the District of Columbia, only weeks earlier.

■ **About 8,000 students in Harrison County, Miss., would continue to attend county schools even if an upcoming annexation effort makes them residents of Gulfport**, a state judge has ruled.

An annexation being considered by Gulfport officials would dramatically shift the enrollment and demographics of schools in both the city school district and the Harrison County district, which has operated under a federal desegregation order since 1980.

To avoid creating problems for the two districts, a chancery court judge ruled on Sept. 5 that the annexation should not alter the county district's boundaries.

The decision is only the first step toward solving the potential problem, said Albert Necaise, the lawyer for the county district. The county also is seeking a ruling from the U.S. Justice Department and a U.S. District Court judge.

If the current boundary is not maintained, Gulfport's annexation could turn the county district, which now includes about 11,000 students and a 25 percent minority population, into a district of 3,000 students with a 2 percent minority enrollment, Mr. Necaise said.

■ **A rural Virginia school system should reimburse a disabled student for the education-related costs he incurred while he was hospitalized for a nervous breakdown,** a federal appeals court has ruled.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has ruled that Botetourt County school officials violated federal special-education law in 1987 when they delayed in providing services for Matthew Tice, who was then a handicapped 2nd-grade student in the district. Before a final placement determination was made, the boy suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for a month at a private facility, which provided education and therapy.

"We're talking about a delay of weeks and months," said Leisa Kuba Ciaffone, a lawyer for the boy. "The school system really was not paying attention."

School officials had contended that they were not liable because their delay in providing services had not caused his nervous breakdown. The court said that contention was irrelevant.

■ **Responding to a public outcry, a high school in Georgia is rethinking its policy of using color-coded student identification cards.**

Under a program created by the school and local businesses, students at Norcross High School in Gwinnett County this month were issued identification cards that reflected their grade standing. Students with A and B averages received gold- and silver-colored cards, respectively, while all other students received white cards.

Under the merit plan, holders of gold cards are eligible for discounts at local businesses.

Charles Meagher, the school's principal, says the program was meant to reward and recognize academic achievement. But pub-

A Student Body With Drive

Los Angeles Times Photo/David Rae Morris

Jim McElreath, a former race-car driver, signals the opening of the Ontario Center School.

"Boys and girls, start your minds."

That might be an appropriate announcement each morning at the new Ontario (Calif.) Center School. The K-6 school, which opened this fall on what was once part of the famous Ontario Motor Speedway, has incorporated a racing motif into its design.

Its forebear was a $35-million motor speedway that once was called the "Taj Mahal of motor racing."

Located on what was once a parking lot for the track, the school's raceway theme begins with its motto: "Winning Through Education." The school's central hall is a racetrack-like circle.

Speedway graphics adorn the classrooms: Green flags (the starter's signal) are used in the K class, while checkered flags (the winner's signal) decorate the 6th-grade class.

School got under way this month when the 500 students got the checkered flag from Jim McElreath, a former race-car driver who won the first event at the old raceway 20 years ago. —G.B.

lic reaction against what was perceived as a "caste system" has been so negative that Mr. Meagher has discontinued the policy of linking grade average to the card's color. The cards will now only be used for in-school purposes, and Mr. Meagher is meeting with faculty advisers, student leaders, and local parent groups to develop another method for rewarding outstanding students.

■ **A federal judge in Alexandria, Va., has dismissed a lawsuit filed by a former Prince William County, Va., teacher who claimed she was discriminated against because she has a learning disability.**

The teacher, Sofia Pandazides, failed eight times to meet a state-mandated cutoff score of 649 on the National Teachers Examinations. Passage of the test is required for permanent certification in Virginia.

Ms. Pandazides, who taught emotionally disturbed middle-school students for two years, was not rehired after she failed the test.

Her lawyer, Steven D. Stone, said he intends to refile the case because federal law prohibits employers from using tests that "prey upon" an applicant's disabilities. Ms. Pandazides is suffering from an "auditory-visual process delay" that makes it impossible for her to complete a "fast-paced, timed exam" such as the N.T.E., Mr. Stone said.

Ms. Pandazides twice was given 15 extra minutes in which to complete each of the test's four sections, but Mr. Stone said that accommodation was not enough to compensate for his client's disability.

Mr. Stone said the new lawsuit would ask that the state make an "individual determination" in Ms. Pandazides's case that would take into account her teaching experience.

■ **The Mescalero Apache Tribe of New Mexico has opened an independent, tribally operated school on its lands after failing to negotiate an agreement with a nearby school district to prevent the busing of students off the reservation.**

The tribe opened its school late last month in temporary classrooms adjacent to a former community center where the Tularosa school district had been educating native children.

An elementary school on the reservation was destroyed by arsonists in February. When state inspectors declared the community center unsafe, school district officials proposed to bus children off the reservation to another school.

Tribe leaders asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs to open a school on the reservation while they negotiated a new agreement with the neighboring Ruiddoso school district. But B.I.A. officials said short timelines made it impossible to find money in the federal budget for the project.

Officials at the Tularosa district, meanwhile, may have to lay off staff members because of the loss of state and federal education funds precipitated by the tribe's action.

■ **The Loudon County, Va., school district has asked the state's department of education to decide if its revised plan to allow parents to remove their children from sex-education classes violates state law.**

Under state law, parents are allowed to remove their children from all or any part of the required K-12, family-life education program. Under the new Loudon County plan, parents would not be allowed to remove their children from those parts of the program that were being taught before state-mandated standards took effect this year.

Sandra Moody, an assistant to the superintendent, said about 70 percent of what is now considered the family-life education program had previously been included in the curriculum, such as teaching kindergartners their name and address.

Last year, when county parents were allowed to remove their children from the entire program, about 7 percent of the county's students did not receive any family-life education, she said.

UPDATE

■ **New York City transit officials have expanded a pilot program under which police officers patrol subway cars designated for students traveling home from school.**

"Operation Safe Passage" was introduced last spring on the city's D subway line near five high schools in Brooklyn: Abraham Lincoln, Edward R. Murrow, Midwood, Sheepshead Bay, and William E. Grady.

Students from seven additional high schools will have access to the designated cars, Transit Police officials announced this month. The schools are Norman Thomas and Julia Richman in Manhattan; Hillcrest and Archbishop Molloy in Queens; and DeWitt Clinton, Walton, and Cardinal Hayes in Brooklyn.

Under the program, a transit police officer boards the second-to-last car of a train at school dismissal time and accompanies the students to the nearest major transfer point.

There have been no major incidents during the six weeks the program was piloted last spring or since the beginning of the new school year, a transit police spokesman said last week.

The program began after a group of principals approached the Transit Authority to discuss their growing concern with the number of crimes committed against students riding the subways. *(See Education Week, April 4, 1990.)*

■ **Anchorage district officials have dropped the lawsuit they filed against the city's police department after a search of school offices last year.**

School and city officials reached an agreement Sept. 4 stipulating that each side would pay its own legal expenses and that the lawsuit against the police department would be dropped.

School officials sued after the police searched district offices last fall as part of an investigation of a teacher-student sex scandal. The police were searching for evidence that school officials had covered up evidence of a relationship between the teacher and a 17-year-old student. *(See Education Week, Oct. 25, 1989.)*

The district charged in its suit that police broke state and federal laws protecting the confidentiality of student and personnel records. All but one of the charges in the suit were dismissed last summer. The teacher was charged with sexual abuse of a minor, but a judge later ruled that no crime was committed because the student was older than 16, the age of consent in Alaska.

■ **A pastoral statement urging that Connecticut's schools be desegregated was read on Sept. 23 from church pulpits throughout the state.**

The statement was prepared by the Christian Conference of Connecticut, the state's council of churches, in response to a pending desegregation lawsuit. *(See Education Week, May 30, 1990.)*

"The lack of integration in our public schools threatens the vision of a harmonious, fair, and pluralistic society," the statement said. "We confess that the church itself has fallen far short of its own teachings, and that the church, as a reflection of society, is often a patently segregated institution."

The statement noted that 60 percent of Connecticut students who are members of minority groups attend schools in the state's five largest cities, while "neighborhood schools immediately contiguous to inner cities often have less than 5 percent minority enrollments."

■ **Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago has submitted to the City Council the final eight nominees for the city's permanent board of education. The council is to vote on the nominees next month.**

Under a process established by the 1988 state legislation that made sweeping changes in the Chicago school system, the Mayor was to pick nominees from 15 slates of three candidates submitted by a nominating panel.

The Mayor chose seven candidates in May but rejected the other slates presented, sparking a protest outside his office. *(See Education Week, May 23, 1990.)* The council has confirmed his first seven choices.

The Mayor's new nominees, chosen from new slates submitted by the panel, are: Ashish K. Sen, 48, a professor of urban planning at the University of Illinois at Chicago; Pamela A. Lenane, 45, a lawyer in private practice; Saundra J. Bishop, 49, a former administrator in the Chicago Department of Aging and Disability; Grady Bailey, 32, manager of marketing relations for Illinois Bell Telephone Company; Bertha G. Magana, 34, a lawyer and citywide education coordinator for the United Neighborhood Organization of Chicago; Anna Mustafa, 41, a youth coordinator and community representative for the Chicago Area Project; Juan S. Cruz, 65, a retired Chicago educator; and Darryl F. James, 36, rector of the Messiah-St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church.

DIMENSIONS

Shootings in Schools

At least 71 people have been shot to death, and 201 others severely wounded, in schools since September 1986, according to a survey by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence.

Relying on newspaper accounts from across the country, the center totaled reports of gun use in schools over the past four academic years. The center's report, "Caught in the Crossfire: A Report on Gun Violence in Our Nation's Schools," concludes that 227 incidents involving guns took place during the period.

California led the states with 29 incidents that resulted in 16 deaths and 45 woundings. Florida (25 incidents) and New York (23 incidents) followed.

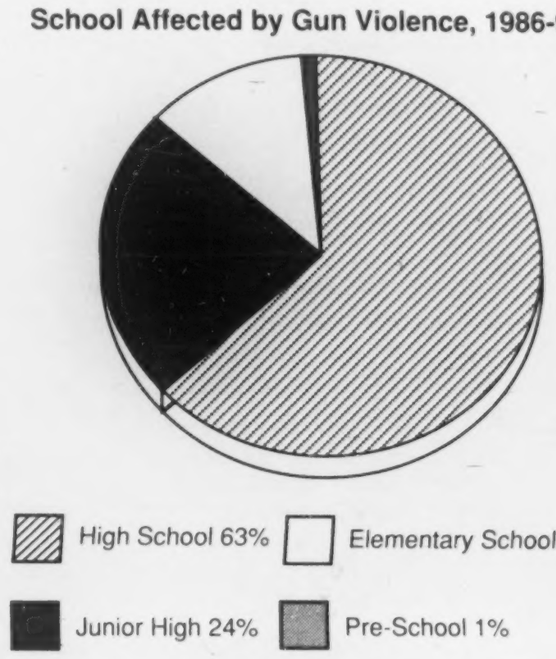
Sixty-five of the killings were of students; males were most often the offenders (93 percent) and the victims (76 percent), the advocacy group reported.

Schoolchildren ages 14 to 17 were most at risk of gun violence in schools, according to the report.

The report acknowledges that the data are only as reliable as the news accounts.

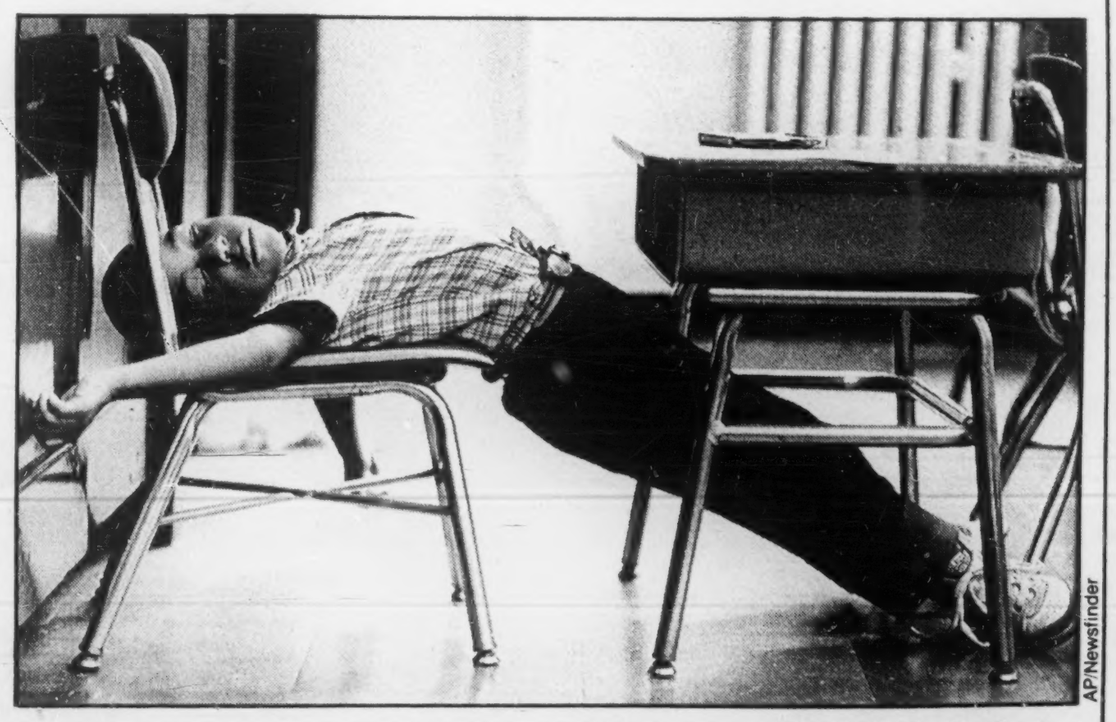
The report is available from the center, 1225 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

School Affected by Gun Violence, 1986-90



SOURCE: Center to Prevent Handgun Violence

Back to the Books



AP/Newsfinder

Six-year-old Gregg Covan tried to get comfortable during the first day of school—and his first day in the 1st grade—at the Eliot School in Boston's North End.

New Teachers Say They Are Prepared To Teach Ethnically Diverse Students

By Karen Diegmueller

A large majority of graduates entering the classroom as teachers for the first time this fall believe their professional training has prepared them to instruct students from different ethnic backgrounds, according to a survey released last week.

Eighty percent of the 1,002 beginning teachers polled for the eighth Metropolitan Life survey of teachers agreed "strongly" or "somewhat" that their training had readied them for this potentially challenging assignment.

At the same time, 58 percent of the respondents said they wished they had had more practical training as an educator before being assigned their own classroom.

In recent years, many critics have charged that teacher-education schools are failing to instruct candidates adequately in the education of students from minority groups, a rapidly growing segment of the public-school population.

Whether the neophytes surveyed sustain their generally positive attitude on this and other issues raised in the poll will be determined when Louis Harris and Associates conducts a follow-up survey at the conclusion of their first year of teaching.

The poll, "The Metropolitan Life Survey of New Teachers: Expectations and Ideals," represents the first time that the insurance company and its pollsters, who have surveyed teachers annually since 1984, have singled out new teachers for their views.

All of the respondents, who were polled by phone during July and August, graduated from college this year. They had either accepted positions to teach or expected to teach in public schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

The lion's share of the teachers surveyed—90 percent—indicated that they viewed teaching as a long-term career choice. The response is in stark contrast to findings that a significant proportion of teachers drop out of the profession during the first five years.

Optimistic About Problems

Despite their lack of experience, the teachers polled did not appear naïve in their assessment of the problems they might face in the classroom.

Three-fourths said that many children are so problem-plagued that it is difficult for them to be good students, and nearly half observed that even the best teachers would encounter difficulties in teaching more than two-thirds of their students.

Nevertheless, the respondents almost universally expressed the belief that all children can learn and that the teachers as individuals could make a difference in their students' lives.

Only 19 percent of those polled agreed with the statement that a school's only job is to teach children and that responsibility for their health and social problems lies with outside agencies.

Both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers issued statements expressing their satisfaction with the level of idealism and optimism of the incoming teaching force as indicated by the findings.

But the teachers' unions also voiced cautionary notes.

Albert Shanker, president of the A.F.T., said: "I can almost guarantee that unless government and other institutions start solving the out-of-school problems of kids—and unless our schools change dramatically to support teaching and learning—five years from now this idealistic and committed group of new teachers will be leaving the profession in droves."

And Keith B. Geiger, president of the N.E.A., said he was "disturbed that one-fifth of those surveyed said they were not prepared to teach students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds."

National Test Favored

In other highlights of the survey:

- Two-thirds of the respondents agreed that teachers should be required to take a national, standardized test to demonstrate their qualifications.
- While 99 percent said teachers need to work well with parents, 70 percent said that parents all too frequently treat teachers as adversaries.
- Nearly all the teachers said they expected their principals to create a learning environment for students.
- Forty percent indicated that teachers are not respected in today's society.

Portrait of New Teachers: Their Attitudes and Expectations

Percentage

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Total Agree	Total Disagree
My training has prepared me to teach students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds	42	39	15	5	80	20
All teachers should take a national, standardized test to demonstrate their qualifications	31	35	19	15	66	34
I wish I had more practical training to be a teacher before I begin to have my own classroom	26	32	23	18	58	42
I expect that the principal of my school will create an environment which will help my students learn	73	24	2	-	98	2
Most teachers are dedicated to their work	30	60	9	1	90	10
Teachers are respected in today's society	7	53	31	9	60	40

SOURCE: Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1990.

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1990 ETS INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Plaza, New York City ● Saturday, October 27, 1990

THE ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS

MORNING SESSION

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
Gregory R. Anrig, President, Educational Testing Service

THE NEED FOR NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS
Richard W. Riley, Former Governor, South Carolina

THE PROMISES AND PERILS OF ASSESSING NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS
The Educational Dilemmas
Joan Raymond, General Superintendent, Houston Independent School District
The Measurement Dilemmas
Andrew C. Porter, Director, Wisconsin Center for Education Research and Professor of Education Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Discussant: Emerson J. Elliott, Acting U.S. Commissioner of Education Statistics

AFTERNOON SESSION

Concurrent Sessions:

I: **NAEP: A NATIONAL REPORT CARD FOR EDUCATION AND THE PUBLIC**
Speaker: Archie E. Lapointe, Executive Director, National Assessment of Educational Progress

Discussant: John L. Reddaway, Secretary of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, Great Britain

II: **THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE WITH NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ASSESSMENT**
Speaker: Clare Burstall, Director, National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales

Discussant: Lyle V. Jones, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Director of the Psychometric Laboratory, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

THE PUBLIC'S EXPECTATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS
Gene Maeroff, Senior Fellow, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

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EDUCATION WEEK

American Education's Newspaper of Record | **Volume X, Number 5 · October 3, 1990** | *© 1990 Editorial Projects in Education / $2.50*

One Year After Takeover by State, Cautious Optimism in Jersey City

By Lynn Olson

JERSEY CITY, N.J.—One year ago this week, the state of New Jersey assumed total control of this city's public schools, replacing its superintendent and school board with its own hand-picked management team.

The radical step—the only state takeover of a district in the nation—was viewed by many as the last hope for a system so hamstrung by incompetence, political interference, and corruption that it was incapable of improving itself.

Today, observers say, there is "reason for optimism" in Jersey City.

But it is too soon to tell whether state officials can accomplish what decades of local administrators could not: a quality education for 28,000 students, 87.5 percent of whom are black, Asian, or Hispanic.

"The worst thing for a government to do is to have to take over one of its instrumentalities," says Robert E. Boose, acting executive director of the New Jersey School Boards Association. "In taking over a school system, you're taking over a town."

"What the state risks in taking it over," he adds, "is that if it doesn't do any better, then power perceived may be better than power implemented."

Nine states—Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia—have laws that authorize them to intervene in school districts that are failing for academic, political, or fiscal reasons.

In several states, officials have assumed partial control of a district's fiscal or personnel procedures or appointed a monitor to work with local officials.

But in no place, other than Jersey City, has a state actually tried to run a school system itself.

Continued on Page 20

Pim Van Hemmen

Elena J. Scambio, Jersey City's new superintendent, says the school system was fragmented and lacking in direction when she arrived.

Finance Reform Is Struck Down By Texas Judge

Law Ruled Inadequate To Achieve Equity

By Lonnie Harp

A Texas judge last week threw the nation's second-largest state school system into a new round of fiscal and political turmoil by striking down a finance-reform measure approved by the legislature this year.

The law, which was enacted in June after a prolonged and bitter debate, falls far short of the state supreme court's mandate to reduce spending disparities between the state's rich and poor districts, District Judge Scott McCown declared in a strongly worded opinion.

While allowing state schools to operate under the provisions of Senate Bill 1 during the current school year, Judge McCown said the plan "is not the dramatic structural reform that the Supreme Court foresaw would be required."

The judge said he would impose a remedy if the legislature fails to implement a finance system acceptable to the court by next September.

The ruling evoked expressions of dismay from legislators, who said they had produced the best plan that was politically achievable, and delight from representatives of low-wealth districts, who described the decision as unexpectedly forceful.

Commissioner of Education William N. Kirby pledged to appeal the ruling to the state high court, which had set the current events in motion when it ruled last fall in *Edgewood* v. *Kirby* that the existing system of state aid was unconstitutional. *(See Education Week, Oct. 11, 1989.)*

The commissioner also called for a quick renewal of discussions over school-finance alternatives.

"Our state's leaders must display the bold

Continued on Page 17

Vermont Mandates Local Standards Boards for Teachers

By Karen Diegmueller

School districts throughout Vermont are setting up local standards boards to guide the professional development of the state's nearly 7,000 public-school teachers and make recommendations on their relicensure, a venture thought to be the first of its kind in the nation.

By next September, every public school district in the state must be operating a board whose tasks will be to help shape and to approve individualized professional-development plans for each teacher in the district.

Although several states, including Vermont itself, have created state-level professional-standards boards, experts believe the Vermont model to be unique.

Professional-standards boards are among the initiatives that educators have advocated to professionalize teaching. In concept, such boards enable teachers, like their counterparts in the medical and legal fields, to establish the criteria for licensing and ensure that practitioners meet the standards.

But the composition of some boards has drawn criticism from teachers because they have been in the minority on the professional-standards panels.

Moreover, policymakers and educators have struggled with the issue of autonomy.

"If you look around the country, that has been an issue," said Doug Walker, director of basic education for the Vermont Department of Education. "We found a compromise."

Vermont has granted teachers a majority voice on both the state and district-level boards while retaining legal authority at the state level.

In exchange for being given a large measure of control over their destinies, teachers will be held accountable for improving their skills, rather than merely meeting minimum-competency standards.

"If you're going to be an educator in Vermont, you're going to be constantly studying, honing your knowledge," said Commissioner of Education Richard P. Mills. "If you're going to be a professional, there is an obligation for continued growth."

"It is going to be a very powerful driving force in the state to upgrade the profession of teachers," said Susan Kuntz, director of graduate programs in education at St. Michael's College and chairman of the state Standards Board for Professional Educators.

Continued on Page 14

Also in the news

4 **Rejection in Rochester**
Teachers last week narrowly defeated a groundbreaking contract that would have linked pay with job performance.

5 **After 'Mergens'**
Schools across the nation vary in deciding whether to permit Bible-study and prayer groups to meet on campus.

15 **Tar-Heel Troubles**
The state chief's sweeping 20-point plan for reforming precollegiate education is drawing heavy fire.

'Jury Still Out' on Re:Learning's Grassroots Reform Experiments

By Lynn Olson

Educators and policymakers in six states and more than 60 schools are trying to turn the traditional mode of school reform on its head.

Instead of mandating changes from above, they are encouraging schools to foster innovation from below—and then tell state and district officials what's wrong with the established way of doing business.

Known as "Re:Learning," the nationwide effort is aimed at refocusing school reform where educators say it ought to be: on improving the relationship between teachers and students in individual schools.

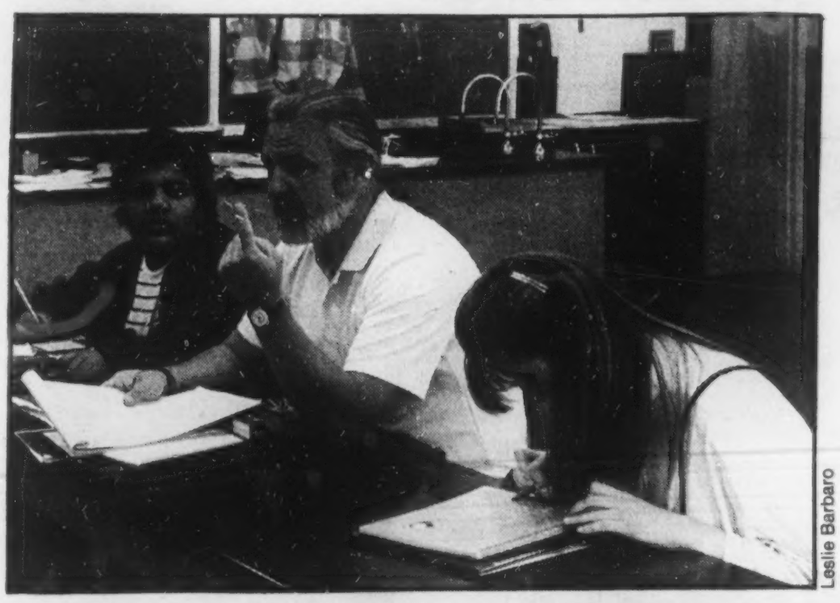
The project evolved from the work of Theodore R. Sizer, a professor of education at Brown University who has spent nearly a decade toiling to make high schools more productive and thoughtful places for teenagers.

But, like many endeavors of such far-reaching scope, Re:Learning is proving that real change is a slow and often elusive process.

"The jury is still out," says Mr. Sizer about the long-term success of the initiative, which is now one of the largest school-reform efforts in the country.

So far, officials in the participating states have tried to make it easier for schools to experiment with bottom-up reform by lifting state and

Continued on Page 18



Leslie Barbaro

Teacher talks with 9th-grade students at a Wilmington, Del., high school that is participating in the Re:Learning project.